

York County Agricultural Land Preservation Board
Patty McCandless, Program Director

The York County Agricultural Land Preservation Office places great importance on planning for agriculture. One designation critical to land preservation are lands enrolled in Ag Security Areas. These are lands devoted to agricultural uses and protected from ordinance by their municipality that would unreasonably restrict normal farming practices. YCALPB staff are currently working on updating our Ag Security information for every municipality within the county. There are over 4,400 Ag Security tracts county-wide, and we will be reaching out to municipalities for their help, support, and input in order to complete this project.

The YCALPB recently selected 12 easement applications for farmland preservation. Board members and staff reviewed 58 applications, covering 5,050 acres of productive farmlands, during the first quarter of 2014. Of the 58 applications, 12 scored high enough to warrant an appraisal to determine their agricultural conservation easement value. The YCALPB will offer each landowner 90% of the easement value and, if owners accept, their easement application will be submitted for State Board review and approval. Preservation is a permanent deed restriction and these restrictions remain in place forever, transferring from one owner to the next, ensuring the farm will be used primarily for agricultural production.

The County of York, acting through the YCALPB, also operates an easement donation program. To date, two farms have been preserved through a bargain sale easement donation to the County of York. The requirements are far less stringent than the State regulated program and agricultural production is not required. A recent amendment to the County's Easement Donation Program now requires a refundable fee with the submission of an application to the County of York Easement Donation Program.

On January 22, 2014 the York County Board of Commissioner's approved an easement allocation of \$113,776 for the purchase of 2014 ag conservation easements. The County of York received notification of \$1,038,098 in State funds following the PA Ag Land Preservation Board's February 2014 meeting. Typical matches in recent years have produced an 8 to 1 match for the County. Thank You County Commissioner's.

The YCALPB continues to apply for federal funding through the USDA- Federal Farm Bill. With the recent passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, County Preservation offices may seek additional federal dollars from their ACE Program to preserve additional farms. A deadline of June 6, 2014 has been set for counties to apply for federal funds with qualifying easement applications.

A reminder to owners of preserved farms, staff will no longer be visiting farms on an annual basis. Legislative changes of 2013 now allow preserved farms to be visited every other year. Easements which used federal funding or with easement concerns will receive an annual visit.

Landowners interested in preserving their farmland may contact the agency at (717) 840-7400, or find our information at www.YorkCountyPA.gov . Useful Links and a Preservation Map now show all preserved farms within the county. See if any preserved farms are near you. The YCALPB has preserved 255 farms, covering 39,145 acres since program inception in 1989. The York County Ag Land Preservation Program continues to rank third in the state and ninth in the Nation for acres of farmland preserved. YCALPB Office Hours are 8 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday. We are located at 118 Pleasant Acres Rd York PA 17402, the County Annex Building.